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Letter dated 14 May 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to draw your attention to the following statements on the Presidential elections in Panama (see annex I) and on the adoption of the resolution and recommendations of the Pourgourides report on disappeared persons in Belarus by the Council of Europe (see annex II) issued on 13 and 14 May 2004, respectively, by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union.

I would be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annexes could be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Richard **Ryan**
Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations

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Annex I to the letter dated 14 May 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Statement on the Presidential elections in Panama issued on 13 May 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

The European Union welcomes the successful holding of elections in Panama on 2 May 2004 and expresses its sincere congratulations to the President-elect, Mr. Martin Torrijos Espino.

The high voter turnout for the poll, which was freely and fairly conducted, confirms the strength and maturity of Panamanian democracy.

The European Union will continue its support for the economic development of Panama and looks forward to strengthening its ties with Panama, in particular within the framework of the Union's regional cooperation with Central America.

The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.

Annex II to the letter dated 14 May 2004 from the Permanent Representative of Ireland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: English and French]

Statement on the adoption of the resolution and recommendations of the Pourgourides report on disappeared persons in Belarus by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 28 April 2004 issued on 14 May 2004 by the Presidency on behalf of the European Union

The European Union takes note of the adoption of the resolution and recommendations of the Pourgourides report on disappeared persons in Belarus by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe of 28 April 2004. The European Union is gravely concerned about the findings of the report, which raises issues of the most fundamental concern in relation to human rights and the rule of law in Belarus.

The European Union notes that the report refers to high-level State involvement in politically motivated disappearances. The report concludes that the disappearances have not been properly investigated and that steps were taken at the highest level to cover up the disappearances.

The European Union supports the request made by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe that the competent Belarusian authorities launch a truly independent investigation into the disappearances. This investigation should examine, inter alia, the conduct of the Prosecutor General, the Minister for Sport and Tourism and others named in the Pourgourides report. The European Union calls for such an investigation to be opened under a neutral investigator. Pending such investigation, the European Union questions whether those named should remain in their current positions of authority.

Given the seriousness of the findings of the Pourgourides report, and the length of time which has already passed, the European Union believes that the early publication of the findings of such an independent report is required. If criminal proceedings are warranted, these should be instituted without delay.

The European Union will remain seized of this issue and of follow-up actions by the Government of Belarus. The Union will study further the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Assembly as part of its ongoing concern about the human rights situation in Belarus.

The European Union also takes note of the adoption of the resolution and recommendations of the report on the persecution of the press in the Republic of Belarus by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The European Union remains extremely concerned about the situation of the press in Belarus and calls on the Government of Belarus to act on the recommendations in the report.

The candidate countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, the countries of the stabilization and association process and potential candidates Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, and the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, members of the European Economic Area, align themselves with this statement.